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Cross-Strait Colonialism:

Marxism and the Construction of Taiwanese Nationalism

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**Cross-Strait Colonialism:
Marxism and the Construction of Taiwanese Nationalism**

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Thesis

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School
of the University of Texas at Austin
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Master of Arts

The University of Texas at Austin

August 2020

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The University of Texas at Austin, 2020

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This thesis explores the history of the Taiwanese independence movement, particularly focusing upon the relationship between the creation of a Taiwanese nationalism and the communist movement. This is accomplished via examining the earliest historiographic writing centered on Taiwan and comparing it with the dominant views of Taiwan in Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) and Chinese Communist Party (CCP) historiography, which demonstrates how the original Taiwanese nationalism was derived from a Marxist historical narrative. The history of this socialist nationalism is then deployed as a foil to critique both KMT and CCP narratives of Taiwan and its place in China's history. The history of the Taiwanese Communist Party is explored in depth, particularly its relationship with the independence movement, the CCP, and the Japanese Communist Party. The communist origin of Taiwanese nationalism destabilizes the dominant discourse of "One China," and illustrates how nationalism is sometimes, paradoxically, the only thing that can resist other more oppressive nationalisms.

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Introduction

The Taiwanese nation now faces the two enemies of the Chiang Nationalist Warlord, with his fascist colonialism, and the socialist imperialism of Chinese Communists. —Su Beng¹

Su Beng's views reflect the depth of Taiwanese independence brainwashing's poisonous influence on individuals, but the fact that there is only one China cannot change. —Xinhua, the PRC's state news agency²

On September 20th 2019, the Marxist historian and Taiwanese independence activist who wrote the first history of Taiwan that took Taiwan as its center instead of China, Su Beng, died of pneumonia in Taipei at the age of 100.³ Two days before his death, the sitting president of the ROC, Tsai Ying-wen, paid him a visit in the hospital, assuring him that she would continue to fight Taiwan's battle for independence from the PRC. It may seem surprising at first that Su Beng, a former communist revolutionary, and Tsai Ying-wen, the leader of the broadly neo-liberal Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), would see each other as allies, as their politics have nothing in common beyond advocating for Taiwanese independence, but this is not an uncommon phenomenon. Although today the Taiwanese independence/nationalist movement and its accompanying discourses are firmly located within the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), which is based on a political ideology of Liberalism, the roots of the movement lie firmly planted in the Taiwanese communist movement, of which Su Beng was a member of, much to the chagrin of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

¹ Su, Beng. *Taiwan's 400 Year History*. 98.

² “103 岁台独大佬史明去世 曾被痛批白活一生,” n.d. <http://www.xinhujiaodian.com/news/detail?id=3181>.

³ Horton, Chris. “Su Beng, a Father of Taiwan Independence, Dies at 100.” *The New York Times*, October 4, 2019, sec. World. <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/10/04/world/asia/su-beng-dead.html>.

Su Beng was a well-known figure in the Taiwanese political arena, whose advocacy for Taiwanese independence was so vociferous that official spokespersons of the People's Republic of China often felt the need to address him directly. The PRC's Xinhua News Agency published a highly condescending "obituary" for him in which they quoted an official spokesperson for the PRC's Taiwan Affairs Office as saying: "Regardless of whether Su Beng travels all over to every country in the world, I am afraid there is no place called the State of Taiwan."⁴ It is evident from this statement that the CCP officials fail to understand the objective of Su Beng's life's work, and completely misunderstand why an old Marxist like him could be popular with young liberals in Taiwan today. His popularity and influence is not due to arguing that a Taiwanese state already exists (even though this is technically true), but rather from the history he wrote that argues for the 400+ year existence of a separate Taiwanese nation, which laid the groundwork for the construction of an imagined Taiwanese community.

Su Beng's narrative presents Taiwan as a perpetual periphery to various empires; Dutch periphery, Spanish periphery, Qing periphery, Japanese periphery, ROC periphery, to world periphery (excluded from UN, WHO, etc), but what is too contemporary for Su Beng to have accounted for in his original narrative is that as Taiwan's economy develops, *Taishang*⁵ turn mainland China into their own periphery (exploited by Foxconn, Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company, etc). He argues that it is this unique 400 year experience of periphery that has generated an authentic Taiwanese nation, although it should be noted that at this time it is questionable that any significant number of Taiwanese people felt they were a nation of their own. Despite the Marxist argument that he makes, which strongly echoes Marx's idea that the

⁴ "103 岁台独大佬史明去世 曾被痛批白活一生," n.d. <http://www.xinhujiaodian.com/news/detail?id=3181>.

⁵ 台商, Taiwanese investors/entrepreneurs in the PRC.

consciousness of men is the product of their material circumstances,⁶ the objective circumstances in Taiwan at the time (i.e. the lack of a widespread Taiwanese national identity) reveal that Su Beng was himself actively engaging in the creation of an imagined community that did not exist previously. This study aims to trace the construction of this imagined community by Taiwanese socialists by comparing the development of the idea of a Taiwanese nation with the development of CCP Chinese nationalism in the mainland.

Any discussion of Taiwanese nationalism and identity must engage with the recent work of Evan Dawley, who is a major scholar in the newly emerging field of Taiwan studies. His book, *Becoming Taiwanese*, traces the genesis of a unique Taiwanese ethnic identity in the port city of Keelung, in which he attempts to move the study of Taiwanese identity beyond the confines of presentist, nation-state centered history and into a type of history centered on the construction of a Taiwanese conscious by individuals and their understanding of themselves vis-à-vis the state that was administering the island (e.g. the Japanese Empire, Nationalist China, etc.). He argues against the notion that ethnic identities are nonmodern or only become a part of modernity when they evolve into ethnonationalism, and that the birth of Taiwanese ethnic identity was a fundamentally modern process, inextricably linked to the modernizing projects of both the KMT and Japanese colonial administration. Departing from traditional textually-based analysis of identity, he instead adopts a performative approach, based upon the idea that “people manifest their identity through their actions when they act in ways that contrast with or oppose prescribed behavior, maintain particular behaviors outside of their initial historical context, or modify specific activities to accord with new circumstances without abandoning them in favor of

⁶ Marx, Karl. *The German Ideology*, n.d. <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/german-ideology/ch01a.htm>.

newly invented traditions.”⁷ For Dawley, as well as the Taiwanese Marxists at the center of this study, Taiwanese ethnic consciousness was formed in opposition to the nationalisms of China and Japan, and is defined by this opposition.

Although the work of Evan Dawley is well researched and convincing, this study will examine Taiwan and Taiwanese consciousness within a very different framework. The bulk of recent historical scholarship on Taiwan focuses on identity and is written in such a way that the vast majority of it almost seems to be primarily intended to justify/defend Taiwanese claims to an “authentic” identity, but this seems to me to be counterproductive. As Prasenjit Duara discusses in his work on Manchukuo, what does it mean for an identity to be “authentic?”⁸ Is there even such a thing? I would argue that this is not the case, especially in light of Fredrick Cooper’s work on identity, where he argues that identity is too nebulous and ill-defined a concept to deploy it as an analytical category in scholarship.⁹ This study does not take Taiwanese ethnic or national identity as its subject, but rather the construction of Taiwanese nationalism, which is to say that the focus is not upon the subjectivity of Taiwanese people and how they interpret themselves as part of a particular nation or ethnic group. Instead, the aim is to examine the motivations and strategies of those individuals and movements who sought to forge a nation where previously there was none, as well as the process by which they went about achieving this. Widespread identification with Taiwanese nationalism is a recent phenomenon that only really began to take place after the end of martial law in the late 1980’s, which developed contemporaneously with an explosion of scholarship that sought to promote just such a nationalism after the lifting of state censorship. I argue that Taiwanese nationalism has been,

⁷ Dawley, *Becoming Taiwanese*. 17.

⁸ Duara, *Sovereignty and Authenticity*.

⁹ Cooper, *Colonialism in Question*.

very transparently, actively constructed by activists and intellectuals since that time, and accordingly this study seeks to explore the earliest attempts to construct Taiwanese nationalism by Taiwanese leftists, which occurred well before the end of martial law and during the Japanese colonial period. The objective of this study is not only to examine Taiwanese nationalism as a case study of how nationalism is constructed (a la Prasenjit Duara's work on Manchukuo), but also to put in dialogue two narratives: Taiwanese leftists' narratives that construct an imagined community of a Taiwanese nation and CCP narratives of Chinese and Taiwanese history. The Marxists' attempts at this kind of construction resist both Chinese communist and nationalist narratives of Taiwan and Chinese nationalism more broadly and serve as a challenge to the claims to "authenticity" of Chinese or any other brand of nationalism.

This study was undertaken because of the author's own interest in Taiwanese nationalism and East Asian Marxism, which was initially imagined as a very niche topic that would contribute to those two fields of study, but over time the multiplicity of ways in which this project intersected with the transnational became ever more apparent. Taiwan itself is an inherently transnational subject, due to the way it exists in the borderlands of multiple empires and the counter-intuitiveness of a nationalism for such a place serving as a foil to seemingly more stable nationalisms, and the communist movement of the 20th century is famously predicated on a truly global revolution. As my investigations progressed, it became clear that this topic had significance well beyond the field of East Asian studies, with the possibility to be a meaningful contribution to studies of colonization, nationalism, and colonial communists movements, as well as being extremely relevant to contemporary geopolitical developments.

The rise of right-wing populist and nationalist movements (e.g. the election of Donald Trump, Brexit, etc.) around the world is intimately linked to the contemporary situation in

Taiwan. The Taiwanese independence movement mirrors such movements around the world in its staunch opposition to globalism, but primarily its opposition to any kind of close economic relationship with China. US President Donald Trump has become regarded as a hero and champion of democracy by young independence activists and freedom fighters in Taiwan as well as Hong Kong. Freddy Lim, an international rockstar, member of the legislative yuan, and leader of the New Power Party that emerged from the Sunflower Movement; was invited to and attended Donald Trump's inauguration,¹⁰ which in addition to his phone call with President Tsai Ying-wen was an unprecedented break from the way every American administration since Nixon had kowtowed to the CCP.¹¹ Similarly, during the Hong Kong protests that first erupted in 2019 there were multiple occasions of protestors marching while carrying images or effigies of Trump,¹² or directly appealing to him or thanking him in interviews. The fact that figures or movements such as Donald Trump and the forces that elected him could ever be seen as emancipatory or as a champion *against* authoritarianism must no doubt come as a shock to westerners, especially intellectuals, but this is the genuine sentiment of people who have long felt abandoned by the traditional western political establishment that espoused self-determination and democracy, but at the same time was selling vibrant democratic societies in East Asia down the river to the PRC in the name of Francis Fukuyama's End of History. All of which was done out of a mistaken belief that, as Margert Thatcher said when asked to justify the Hong Kong

¹⁰ Strong, Matthew. "Ex-Premier to Represent Taiwan at Trump Inaug..." *Taiwan News*, December 23, 2016. <https://www.taiwannews.com.tw/en/news/3057192>.

¹¹ Gearan, Anne, Philip Rucker, and Simon Denyer. "Trump's Taiwan Phone Call Was Long Planned, Say People Who Were Involved." *Washington Post*, December 4, 2016. https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/trumps-taiwan-phone-call-was-weeks-in-the-planning-say-people-who-were-involved/2016/12/04/f8be4b0c-ba4e-11e6-94ac-3d324840106c_story.html.

¹² Berlinger, Joshua. "Protesters Hail Trump's 'Thanksgiving Present' for Hong Kong." *CNN*, November 28, 2019. <https://www.cnn.com/2019/11/28/asia/hong-kong-reaction-trump-legislation-intl-hnk/index.html>.

handover, “You can’t just be partially free,”¹³ by which she meant that economic liberalization would eventually lead to political liberalization. This study will hopefully contribute to scholarship of this nature on contemporary populist and anti-globalist political movements.

The ultimate importance of studying the Taiwanese independence movement, however, lies within the potential of such studies to further the cause of peaceful Cross-Strait relations, although this task will, in my opinion, ultimately prove futile. During a seminar I was part of the group which was discussing the periodization of pre and postwar with regards to the second World War and someone asked, “Are we still in the post-war period?” To which I responded, “No, we’re in the pre-war period.” This statement elicited a great deal of laughter from the group, but I intended it as a serious one. The CCP leadership does not operate off rational logic, they are possessed by a teleological understanding of history that places the annexation of Taiwan as the most important goal for the whole society, a goal that must be accomplished at all costs, which I will provide evidence for in a later section of the thesis. The likelihood of Taiwan peacefully entering into union with the PRC is essentially zero, which correspondingly raises the likelihood of invasion immensely. Such an invasion would almost surely see the intervention of the United States and her East Asian allies, leading to the kind of destruction that the world has not known since the 1940’s.

Luo Yuan, a Rear Admiral in the People’s Liberation Army Navy who holds an academic position responsible for drafting PLAN military doctrine, has publicly stated that the United States is a paper tiger, and that the PLAN need only sink a US Navy aircraft carrier or two and

¹³ Much like Francis Fukuyama, she meant that the liberal economic system of Hong Kong would ignite liberalization in China after the handover, and economic liberalization would inevitably lead to social and democratic liberalization.

the spirit of the American public will be broken, there will be no war.¹⁴ This bears a shocking resemblance to the thinking within the Japanese Imperial Navy before they carried out their attack on Pearl Harbor. This sort of misplaced confidence and the belief that one's enemies are decadent and spiritually weak are exactly the kinds of mistaken ideas that would lead one to launch a first strike on a very powerful enemy. As I will explain in Chapter 1, the CCP leadership does not even understand the motivations and resolve of those who oppose them in Taiwan and Hong Kong, but their understanding of their Western enemies' motivations and resolve seems to be even worse. Wang Huning, a close ally of Xi and the politburo's head propagandist, after attending a football game at the US Naval Academy wrote the following:

The Americans pay attention to strength. Football has some strategy, but it's not elegant; mainly, it relies on strength. The Americans apply that spirit to many fields, including the military, politics, and the economy.¹⁵

This statement reflects a total lack of understanding on his part of the phenomenon on which he is commenting.¹⁶ Such ignorance drastically increases the chance of war, and so the ultimate goal of this study is to clearly articulate the ideology, beliefs, and motivations of Taiwanese independence activists, and also PRC nationalists to a limited extent, with the hope that better understanding can avert the tragedy of war or other conflicts.

¹⁴ Lockie, Alex. "China Sets the Stage for a 'bloody Nose' Attack on US Aircraft Carriers, but It Would Backfire Horribly." *Business Insider*, January 11, 2019. <https://www.businessinsider.com/chinas-threats-to-attack-us-aircraft-carriers-would-backfire-horribly-2019-1>.

¹⁵ Osnos, Evan. "The Future of America's Contest with China." *The New Yorker*, January 6, 2020. <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2020/01/13/the-future-of-americas-contest-with-china>.

¹⁶ American football is the most complex sport in terms of strategy, players are required to memorize entire books of plays, and the coaching and play calling is as important as the physical abilities of the players. Wang also attended a football games at a service academy, whose football teams are famous for having players who are much smaller and weaker than their opponents and relying on trick plays and outside-the-box strategy to overcome that deficit.

Methodology

The scope of this study has been limited by the lack of availability of sources relevant to the Taiwanese Communist Party in the United States, most of said sources are located in Japanese archives in Tokyo, Taiwanese archives in Taipei, and Soviet archives in Moscow. There has been little in the way of English scholarship written on the topic, perhaps its mentioned in a paragraph or two here and there, but only once or twice has it even been the subject of even a journal article, let alone a whole book. One interested in this topic also faces the problems born of the unique political position they inhabited—both the KMT and CCP found it convenient to destroy any record of the party as its mere existence destabilizes their respective narratives of Chinese nationalism and Taiwan's place in Chinese history. The only truly disinterested party involved with the TCP was the Japanese Imperial government, which kept detailed records on Taiwanese political movements through their networks of informants, seized correspondence with JCP leaders, and court records. Consequently, the majority of sources one could draw upon for a study such as this one are written in Japanese, of which the author has a rudimentary grasp. Chinese or English translations of said Japanese sources were substituted in order to make up for this deficiency.

Even the writings of prominent Taiwanese TCP supporters and leftist intellectuals were generally composed in Japanese first, the location that served as the capital of the Taiwanese independence movement in exile during the White Terror period and where they were originally published. Chinese translations were used for this study instead of the originals, English translations were generally unacceptable because of the extent to which they have been abridged. In addition to the works of prominent figures like Su Beng, I also drew upon scholarly books on the TCP published in Chinese in Taiwan; these sorts of sources were extremely helpful because

they often contained Chinese translations of TCP documents that were originally written in Japanese (e.g. the party platform, correspondence, etc.). Sometimes contemporary Chinese or English language newspaper articles are incorporated to show the connection of the TCP to the modern independence movement in Taiwan or just to situate it within the contemporary discourse. The remaining sources that I have used in the writing of this study are English language scholarly books and articles; usually they are written on topics other than the TCP but I have been able to infer much from reading such a large swathe of information related to broader topics. Unfortunately, it was not possible to utilize much in the way of primary sources, due to my residing in the United States while writing this, and even the use of English language secondary scholarship was severely constrained by the 2020 severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) pandemic.

The methodology itself is quite simple—I am simply drawing upon the theories of nationalism and its relationship to historiographic writing as discussed by numerous scholars throughout the past few decades.¹⁷ I use the writings of TCP supporters, Taiwanese historians, as well as the history of the TCP itself to demonstrate how nationalism is created and the deployment of historical writing to achieve this. Later these processes in Taiwan and the TCP will be compared to similar processes in China and Japan, to highlight the many ways in which Taiwan is a unique case that is deserving of much greater scholarly attention. This study is greatly constrained by a lack of sources, so it became necessary to examine history-writing itself as a topic, which in the end has greatly enriched the depth and analysis of this thesis.

¹⁷ The actual discussion of theory will come a bit further into the next section.

Chapter 1

Nationalism and History in Contemporary Taiwan

To properly set the stage, we must examine Taiwanese society and cross-strait relations since the late 1980's in more depth. Since the beginning of the opening and reform policies in the PRC and democratization in Taiwan, PRC policy towards Taiwan has been largely consistent, but ROC policy towards the mainland has been wildly inconsistent. The PRC began to try and encourage Taiwanese investors to build factories in Fujian province during the beginning of the opening and reform period, specifically in a special economic zone setup for them in Xiamen, by offering cheap labor and tax breaks, as well as the opportunity to hire factory workers that speak the same language as them (Mandarin or Hokkien). The ROC government did not legalize trade with China until 1990 under Lee Teng-Hui. The economic conditions were generally good in Taiwan from the 1980's on, but began to slow by the mid-1990's, with GDP growth hitting a record low in 1996. Taiwan and the mainland were beginning to grow noticeably interdependent, but most industries were unconcerned.¹⁸

In 1992 the ROC and PRC governments engaged in preliminary negotiations to restart cross-strait dialogue, resulting in the '92 consensus, whereby both parties recommitted themselves to the "one-china principle," albeit even then the ROC government stated that its interpretation of the principle was different than the PRC's. Cross-strait relations were generally good until 1994, when Lee intimated his idea of a separate Taiwanese national identity during an interview with a Japanese newspaper, which raised a great deal of alarm among the leaders of the CCP. Exacerbating the situation, Lee instituted his "go south" policy to encourage businesses to

¹⁸ Lin. 56-57.

invest in Southeast Asia instead of China. The PRC took a conciliatory approach at first, when in 1995 Jiang Zemin sent an 8 point peace offering to Lee, pledging an end to hostilities and pleading for Taiwan to rejoin the mainland under the “one country, two systems” framework developed by Deng Xiaoping. Lee responded by agreeing to all points, with the caveat that reunification could not begin until both governments and parties committed themselves to democracy. Lee’s response enraged the CCP, whom he obviously knew could not accept his proposal, and the hardliners within the party took control of cross-strait policy.¹⁹ In response, the PLA conducted missile tests in the Taiwan Strait in 1995 and 1996, resulting in the Western powers denouncing the PRC for its military aggression. As a direct result, Lee announced his “no haste” policy, which was a plan to severely restrict investment and trade with China, and banned many industries from doing business there, which was agreed upon by both the leaders of the KMT and the DPP. For the rest of Lee’s time as president the relations between the ROC and PRC would remain strained.

In 1999, DPP candidate Chen Shui-Bian was elected president of the ROC. He was a man the CCP regarded with absolute suspicion, as the DPP had traditionally been committed to democracy and Taiwanese independence. Chen was the first non-KMT politician to rule the ROC, and took office during a particularly hard time in 2000. China was still taking a hardline stance against Taiwan, and the economy was performing poorly. These issues (perhaps as well as low poll ratings) led Chen to decide to liberalize economic relations with the mainland again, which he referred to as his “active opening” policy. The CCP refused to change its hardline approach, and so Chen began removing images and statues of Chiang Kai-Shek and other mainland ROC leaders from the country, and embarking on a general campaign of

¹⁹ Lin. 64.

“Taiwan-ization.” In response, the PRC passed the Anti-Secession Law in 2005, which committed the government to invading Taiwan if the ROC government made any moves towards independence. In 2006 Chen won reelection, but relations with China remained cold and his administration was wracked by corruption and scandal. Due to the little positive response he received for his “active opening” policy, he decided to enact a new more restrictive policy towards China called “Active Management, Effective Opening” in order to strengthen his support among the DPP’s base. At the same time as the new restrictions were being imposed, he launched the “name rectification” campaign to replace “China” in government titles for the country with “Taiwan.” PRC policy ultimately remained designed to isolate Taiwan internationally, blocking trade deals and participation in international organizations throughout all of Chen’s two terms.

Elected in 2007 and sworn in in 2008, Chen’s successor, Ma Ying-Jeou, returned power in Taiwan to the KMT. The PRC was much more receptive to Ma than to either of his two predecessors, allowing Ma to immediately begin formulating and then launch a campaign of economic liberalization with regards to China. As the world economy deteriorated during the global financial crisis of 2008, Ma decided to focus all his efforts on cross-strait liberalization, proclaiming that this policy was the best way to fix Taiwan’s devastated economy. The pace of liberalization surprised many, as Ma’s administration very quickly negotiated for direct sea, air, and telephone links between the mainland and Taiwan for the first time since the end of the Chinese Civil War. Ma began negotiations to formalize all these agreements and liberalize even more; this agreement took the form of the Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement (ECFA), which was passed in 2010. The ECFA would for the first time allow mainland Chinese investment in Taiwan, and not just the other way around, and was extremely controversial. It and

its 2014 follow up agreement, the Cross-Strait Service Trade Agreement (CSSTA), directly led to the creation of student protests that would become the Sunflower Movement. Although these protests failed to prevent the passing of the CSSTA, they would effectively serve to hobble Ma for the remainder of his last term in office.

The Sunflower Movement was the first public political movement in Taiwan to clearly demonstrate all the major objections to integration with the mainland that I will discuss in this paper, and was also the first time that the reasoning behind said objections was made so clear. The first and most obvious objection to the CSSTA was to the secretive nature in which it was drafted; Ma never publicly stated he would pursue a cross-strait policy of integration that extreme, and therefore they felt it was an undemocratic policy that should be put to a public vote, if not scrapped entirely. This aspect of the Sunflower Movement best demonstrates the gulf that has formed between the mainland and Taiwan in terms of their political development and culture. Unlike Hong Kong which never had true democracy before the handover, it appears impossible that the Taiwanese would ever accept an electoral system where half or more of the representatives were elected by functional constituencies (i.e. by major industries; in Hong Kong the finance industry has its own representative in the Legislative Council) designed to guarantee that the legislature is pro-business, and therefore pro-Beijing. Furthermore, integration with the mainland was so despised that the protesters brought Ma Ying-Jeou's administration, an administration that was elected into office on a seventeen-point margin of victory and reelected by a still healthy six-point margin, to a grinding halt, sending out a clear signal that a less democratic government would not be tolerated for even a moment. The democratic spirit that Taiwanese have and are now accustomed to would most likely render Taiwan ungovernable for

the PRC or an administration as strongly pro-Beijing as those that have held power in Hong Kong.

The second major objection of the Sunflower Movement to the CSSTA was on economic grounds, again with many of the predictions of its effects made by looking at how Hong Kong has been affected by close economic integration with the PRC. Prior to the CSSTA, mainland investment in Taiwan was essentially banned, and the discourse around cross-strait policy was exclusively centered on how relaxed the regulations should be concerning Taiwanese investment in the mainland. With the ECFA and CSSTA, which were negotiated in secret, Ma Ying-Jeou and the KMT unilaterally decided to permit mainland investment for the first time. This caused a violent response in the public, who were furious that they were not even consulted about this policy before its proposal. Critics pointed to what mainland speculators had done to the real estate market in Hong Kong by constructing enormous quantities of luxury apartments that the vast majority of Hong Kong people cannot even hope to afford, exacerbating a housing shortage that had left over 50,000 people living in cage housing by 2007.²⁰ This would now be a possibility in Taiwan as well due to the measures in the CSSTA which mandated free movement of capital between the mainland and Taiwan. Furthermore, there was the fear that mainland companies, or Taiwanese companies in which they have significant investment, might purchase some or even all major media outlets, similar to what has happened in Hong Kong, leaving the mainstream media with a strong pro-Beijing bias. According to Reporters Without Borders' World Press Freedom Index, Hong Kong has dropped from being ranked 18th in the world in

²⁰ "Number of Persons Living in Cage Housing." *Social Indicators of Hong Kong*, The Hong Kong Council of Social Service, Accessed Oct. 2017, socialindicators.org.hk/en/indicators/housing/8.11

press freedom in 2002 to 73rd in 2017.²¹ Beijing has made its policy towards Taiwan based around political influence through economic influence and integration, and the Sunflower Movement brought this inescapable truth to the forefront of the political discourse. The CSSTA was also opposed due to the perceived negative effect on working class people by the previously passed ECFA, which the Ma administration predicted would create over 263,000 jobs, but as of 2014, when the CSSTA was proposed, had not decreased unemployment, confirming the fears of some analysts that the ECFA would eliminate as many jobs as it created.²²

The purpose of sketching out the political relationship of Taiwan to the PRC is to demonstrate that the CCP leadership is far from the hyper-rational technocrats that they (and the western media) portray them to be. This is evident from examining how they manage efforts towards reunification of Taiwan, but even more so from the spectacular failure of the leadership to understand the protests that started in Hong Kong in the summer of 2019. The British Consulate worker Simon Cheng, who was abducted by the state while visiting the mainland for participating in the protests, described how the kidnapped protesters were imprisoned (in violation of Hong Kong's Basic Law and the Sino-British Joint Declaration on Hong Kong) and tortured, but the line of interrogation was always something like: "Who is paying you to do this? Are you working for the CIA?"²³ This report in isolation might not seem to indicate much, but when viewed in light of the devastating loss that the pro-mainland politicians suffered in the 2019 local elections in Hong Kong, and the fact that reportedly the CCP leadership was caught

²¹ "Media Freedom in Free Fall 20 Years after Hong Kong Returned to China." *Reporters Without Borders*, Reporters Without Borders, 26 July 2017, rsf.org/en/news/media-freedom-free-fall-20-years-after-hong-kong-returned-china.

²² Lin, 221.

²³ Fan, Wenxin. "Former U.K. Consulate Employee Says Chinese Secret Police Tortured Him." *Wall Street Journal*, November 21, 2019. <https://www.wsj.com/articles/former-u-k-consulate-employee-says-chinese-secret-police-tortured-him-11574229602>.

completely off guard by this,²⁴ it begins to become clear that the modern CCP views the same phenomenon as the ultimate font of all evil in Chinese society as did Mao Zedong and Li Dazhao going back to the beginning of the party: *jingshen wuran*²⁵ (spiritual pollution), the contamination of good Chinese subjects by the insidious beliefs and values of the western other. Implicit in this idea is that no “real” Chinese person (to include Hong Kong and Taiwanese people as well as mainlanders) could ever look at the great economic prosperity that the CCP has achieved, and their self-purported role as the liberators of all Chinese people from foreign domination²⁶, and rationally of their own free will choose to oppose the party or its regime. Opposition to the CCP is all held as the result of brainwashing or bribery by the colonizer or other foreign powers, not having been properly educated on what the CCP has done for China, or simply mental illness. Such a marked inability to, or lack of desire to, understand the thought process of one’s enemies has characterized those regimes which have perpetrated the most horrific instances of violence in history, to be committed by loyal party agents, all in the name of the nation.

Contemporary Scholarship on Nationalism

No discussion of the formation or construction of a nationalism would be complete without an examination of Benedict Anderson’s contributions to the field in his opus, *Imagined Communities*. Anderson’s idea is essentially that the nation is an “imagined community” (i.e. the

²⁴ Palmer, James. “Hong Kongers Break Beijing’s Delusions of Victory.” *Foreign Policy*, November 25, 2019. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/11/25/hong-kong-election-beijing-media-delusions-victory/>.

²⁵ 精神污染

²⁶ It is questionable how much the CCP or the KMT contributed to the defeat of the Japanese in World War II.

people that compose it do not actually know each other, as the community is too large to function in the way a real local community does, and as a result functions in a very religious way, with the nation as the moral and spiritual center of the nationalist cosmology), and is created through print capitalism and the circulation of officials throughout the bureaucracy of the polity. The idea of nationalism arising from the circulation of individuals within a broader network has interesting implications in the case of Taiwanese nationalism in the Taiwanese Communist Party, as TCP members circulated within the transnational networks of the international communist movement, and perhaps their nationalism arose in this manner, but this is beyond the scope of this study.

Anderson's ideas become most relevant to this study when examined in dialogue with Prasenjit Duara's work on Manchukuo in *Sovereignty and Authenticity: Manchukuo and the East Asian Modern*. Duara develops the notion of an imagined community as something that can be actively created, best exemplified by the Japanese puppet state in Manchuria, and attempts to interrogate what makes an imagined community or nationalism "authentic." This process is especially transparent in Manchukuo, as the nation was constructed purely as a justification for the Japanese to seize the mineral wealth of northeastern China. The creation of an "authentic" Manchurian nation-state was a massive undertaking that required the work of ethnologists, historians, literary scholars and countless others; a great act of collective fiction writing. Interestingly, there are a number of parallels to be found between the construction of Manchukuo nationalism and Taiwanese nationalism. Both were created with the goal of imagining territory and people *out* of China, the key distinction being that Manchukuo nationalism was created and imposed by the Japanese, whereas Taiwanese nationalism was and is voluntary. Indeed, many Taiwanese nationalists, such as former ROC President Lee Teng-hui, will also often state that

they feel they are more Japanese than Chinese, and that they would much prefer to return to Japanese rule than to be grafted onto the PRC. Many Taiwanese people claim that the fifty years as a colony “civilized” them, and that this is what makes them superior to mainlanders. They are also increasingly attempting to turn to the most “authentic” Taiwanese people, the aborigines, lionizing their culture and attempting to prove some sort of blood or genetic link to them that would separate them from mainland Han people, which resonates deeply with the way the Japanese turned to the Tungusic tribespeople to find the “authentic” Manchurian. The nationalism of the Taiwanese Communist Party was supported by the Japanese Communist Party, of which the TCP was originally a branch, and as a result also resembles that of Manchukuo, to an extent.²⁷

For Duara, all nationalisms are inherently inauthentic as they are all constructed and ahistorical, but this does not make nationalism necessarily a negative phenomenon. Eric Hobsbawm’s argues that there are two primary forms of nationalism, an expansive and incorporative nationalism that welcomes all so long as they ascribe to the same enlightened values that the nation is founded upon, and a limiting nationalism that seeks to exclude the nation from the other. For Hobsbawm, this incorporative nationalism is good, while the excluding nationalism is xenophobic and inherently bad. In light of this, I argue that although I agree that Chinese nationalists in the PRC are correct in their assessment that Taiwanese nationalism is inauthentic, this is irrelevant, because Taiwanese nationalism is an inherently liberating and positive phenomenon due to its incorporative nature and what it is constructed in opposition to: the equally ahistorical construction of Han Chinese nationalism which consolidates itself through the refusal to recognize any alterity within Chinese speaking peoples. If Taiwanese nationalism

²⁷ Liu, “Aboriginal Fractions.”

is inauthentic, then surely a Han Chinese nationalism that was, as William Rowe argues in *China's Last Empire*, created in reaction to a Manchu ethnic identity that was itself constructed in order to administer the Qing Empire is equally inauthentic. Contemporary Taiwanese nationalists seeks to incorporate and accept all the peoples and influences that have played a role in the island's history, presenting Taiwan as a melting pot of Chinese, Japanese, Aboriginal, and Western cultures where all are accepted.²⁸

This incorporative nationalism does have potential pitfalls that must be avoided, however, particularly in historical scholarship. In a recent article, Evan Dawley points to the lessons learned in the field of United States History, which was enriched and its understanding of American politics and society made more accurate through the greater incorporation of the historical plight of minorities, African Americans in particular.²⁹ The problem of the representation of Taiwanese aboriginals is not the same, however. The situation of Taiwanese aboriginals is far more reminiscent of the great historic tragedy of Native Americans. Although the history of how Native American culture and their physical persons were systematically brutalized and exterminated undoubtedly speaks as to the character of American society and the people it was composed of; as a result of the largely successful campaigns to exterminate or assimilate them by the 20th century they no longer played a major role in events in the USA, and we would rightly view any attempt to construct an American nationalism based on the suffering

²⁸ An excellent cultural example of this is the 2008 Taiwanese romantic comedy *Cape No. 7* (海角七號), the highest grossing domestic Taiwanese film of all time, and which was banned in the PRC. The film's plot is based around unsent love letters from a Japanese teacher to his Taiwanese lover during the colonial period, which are discovered by a young Taiwanese postman in contemporary Taiwan, who through his attempts to deliver them is brought into a band being assembled by a Japanese pop star who is working in Taiwan because she is past her prime. The film enraged the PRC's censors because it depicts Taiwan's relationship with Japan as having positive aspects, and the makeup of the band is supposed to represent modern Taiwan and includes a Japanese woman, a Hokkien-speaking Han person, a mandarin speaking descendent of mainland Chinese who fled to Taiwan, and a Taiwanese aboriginal, among others.

²⁹ Dawley, Evan N. "Finding Meaning in Time and Space: Periodisation and Taiwanese-Centric History."

of Natives with skepticism. Likewise, by the end of the Japanese Colonial period, the vast majority of Taiwan's plains aboriginals had been totally assimilated into the Han ethnic majority, freely intermarrying with Han people and adopting their cultural practices and even names.³⁰ The mountain-dwelling aboriginals did not assimilate in this way, but they lived largely separate from Han society and played little role in it. One must therefore be wary of the drive to incorporate the aboriginals as a major aspect of Taiwan's modern history and their deployment in the construction of Taiwanese nationalism, as it reeks of cynical appropriation of aboriginal suffering and culture to legitimize a separate national identity for Taiwan's Han residents.

Historiographic Trends in Post-War Taiwan

After the Nationalist retreat to Taiwan in the late 1940s, the theme of the master narrative of KMT-sanctioned historiography was that, since the beginning of the "century of humiliation" in the 1800s, China had been preyed upon and exploited by Western imperial powers and the Japanese, but that this humiliation was continuously and vigorously resisted by noble Chinese patriots "out of a desire for autonomy and prosperity."³¹ A-chin Hsiau locates the KMT interpretation of the historical relationship of Taiwan to the Chinese mainland as embedded within this master narrative, and that it emphasized six key elements:

- 1) the sanguine, historical, and cultural connections between local Taiwanese and Mainlanders; 2) the contribution made to the development and cultivation of the frontier island of Taiwan by imperial China before Taiwan was ceded to Japan in 1895; 3) the

³⁰ Brown, Melissa J. "Changing Authentic Identities." 465.

³¹ Hsiau, A-chin. "Narrating Taiwan out of the Chinese Empire." 98.

nationalist sentiment and attachment to the ancestral land, the Chinese mainland, of Taiwanese compatriots; 4) the influence of the KMT-led nationalist revolution in the early twentieth century on Taiwanese anti-Japanese activities; 5) the contribution of the eight-year Anti-Japanese War (1937–1945) fought by the KMT to liberate Taiwan from colonial rule; and 6) the task the Taiwanese should shoulder in retaking the mainland.³²

As evidenced by the above, the KMT sought to downplay or even portray as entirely negative the role of the Japanese in developing the Taiwanese society and economy, and furthermore they placed all the positive emphasis on the influence of imperial China and the role of KMT-led nationalist government in liberating Taiwan from Japanese occupation. The KMT canonized “orthodox” Chinese culture and the Mandarin Chinese language, and sought to “re-instill” them among the Taiwanese through its post-war Sinicization campaigns, while at the same time suppressing local Han Chinese culture and practices, as well as the Taiwanese Hokkien language and Japanese, which was the only written language that most Taiwanese people knew.³³

This phenomenon of trying to cement a national identity that supports the legitimacy of the state through the total casting out of the previous ruling power’s historical narrative, as well as their language and culture, is not unique to the KMT. The Japanese sought to turn the Taiwanese into “subjects of the Japanese emperor” (皇民化運動), which they thought could be achieved through the teaching of Japanese language and history to the Taiwanese.³⁴ The teaching of Japanese history, similar to the KMT’s view on teaching Chinese history, was done with the objective of introducing the Taiwanese to the Japanese “national polity” and to cultivate a

³² Hsiao, A-chin. “Narrating Taiwan out of the Chinese Empire.” 99.

³³ Hsiao, A-chin. “Narrating Taiwan out of the Chinese Empire.” 99.

³⁴ 臺灣獨立運動史. 52.

“national spirit.”³⁵ It was not just these outsiders who came to Taiwan and sought to legitimize their rule who did this though; since the 1970-80’s³⁶ a major movement has emerged in Taiwan to throw out or de-Sinicize the historical narrative of the KMT (中國史觀) and replace it with a historical narrative focused on the island itself (臺灣史觀). A-chin Hsiau identifies that the Japanification, Sinicization, and Taiwanification of history are all merely different sides of the same coin—they all seek to suppress or erase the previous narrative while simultaneously constructing a new one that will facilitate the formation of a new national identity.³⁷ Taiwan, much like Manchukuo, has been the site of attempts to construct a multiplicity of different nationalisms, and accordingly has the potential to serve as a unique case study into the study of nationalism(s).

A legacy of the KMT’s rule and the Cold War is the tendency, particularly for scholars in the West, to ignore leftist political movements and narratives in Taiwan. For Taiwanese historians the goal of contemporary Taiwanese historiography is to forge a new imagined community through the othering of mainland China. This perhaps has contributed to the downplaying of the history of the Taiwanese socialist and communist movements because they would bring about a closer relationship or identification with the ostensibly communist mainland. That being said, there has still been far more scholarship on this topic produced in Taiwan than in the West, and although this may be in part because western historians are sympathetic to the geopolitical plight of the Taiwanese and their desire to forge a new Taiwanese

³⁵ Cited in Hsiau, A-chin. *Contemporary Taiwanese Cultural Nationalism*. 151.

³⁶ For a more in-depth exploration of changing Taiwanese historiographic trends since the 1970’s consult A-chin Hsiau’s excellent work on that topic.

³⁷ Hsiau, A-chin. *Contemporary Taiwanese Cultural Nationalism*. 152.

nationalism, it is almost certain that the legacy of cold war ideology which cast Taiwan as “Free China” is a major contributing factor.

Writing Against Empire: Historiographic Writing and Leftwing Political Movements in Exile

In December of 1993, under the cover of darkness, a man arrived in Taiwan aboard a fishing boat, completing a long secretive journey from Japan. As the isle of Formosa materialized out of the darkness in front of him, he laid his eyes on his homeland for the first time in almost 42 years of exile, and at a location very near to the one he landed at when he fled the Chinese mainland in 1949. The man was Su Beng, a Taiwanese Marxist revolutionary, historian, and a longtime leader of the Taiwanese independence movement in exile.³⁸ His return was indicative of just how much Taiwanese society had changed since the lifting of martial law in July 1987. Although he had inspired many a Taiwanese independence activist during the height of martial law in the 1960’s, he returned to a Taiwan where the independence movement and its accompanying discourses were firmly located within the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), which was based on a political ideology of Liberalism that markedly conflicted with his own Marxist views. The Marxist narrative that characterized his historiographic writing on Taiwan and made him one of the most prominent advocates of Taiwanese independence in exile, it seemed, had fallen out of favor.

Prior to the end of martial law and democratization there were no historiographic works produced or discussions of the history of leftwing movements occurring within Taiwan itself.

³⁸ Han, Cheung. “Taiwan in Time: Revolutionary in Exile.” *Taipei Times*, November 5, 2017.

This topic was even largely banned and forgotten within the communist People's Republic of China on the mainland, with many former Taiwanese Communist Party members who had managed to flee the Japanese and KMT to the mainland eventually being purged by the CCP. Xie Xuehong, the former General Secretary of the TCP, was denounced and punished in 1957 during the Anti-Rightist Campaign for "viciously undermining the relations between the people of Taiwan and the people of the motherland."³⁹ Ironically enough, these topics could only be openly written about in Taiwan's former colonizer, Japan, and it is there that they received the most sympathetic international response to their agitation for Taiwanese independence. The best known and most influential of these writers were Ong Iok-tek and Su Beng.

Su Beng was born in Taiwan in 1918 during the height of Japanese colonial rule of the island, and studied political economy in Tokyo at Waseda University, where he read the works of Karl Marx and became a fervent revolutionary. He traveled to mainland China to participate in the ongoing war against the Japanese and Communist revolution in the 1940's, but quickly became disillusioned with the growing totalitarianism of the Chinese Communist Party and returned to Taiwan in 1949, where he soon began to organize against the Kuomintang-led nationalist Chinese government. In 1951 a plot to assassinate Chiang Kai-shek that he was involved in was discovered by the police, and he was forced to flee to Japan. After arriving in Japan he decided that the way to liberate Taiwan from the oppressive government that had taken root there was to educate the Taiwanese about their history, and so he adopted the pen name Su Beng (史明, literally "to make history clear") and set about writing a comprehensive history of the 400 year cycle of colonialism and exploitation in Taiwan, *Taiwan's 400 Year History*.

³⁹ Hsiao, Frank S. T., and Lawrence R. Sullivan. "A Political History of the Taiwanese Communist Party." 286.

Ong Iok-tek had a similar upbringing and life, although he never engaged in revolutionary activity like Su Beng did. Ong was born in 1924 in Tainan to a prominent family of the local community. He began university studies during the second world war at Tokyo University, but he returned to Taiwan early without finishing his education due to the ongoing military conflict. After the handover of Taiwan to the nationalist-led Republic of China government he became a prominent critic of the KMT. In 1949 it became clear to him that his life was in danger under the new government and he fled to Japan, where he would eventually die in exile many decades later. He resumed his studies upon arriving in Japan and completed his PhD at Tokyo University in 1969. He played a prominent role in many Taiwanese independence organizations and publications in Japan, the most well known of which being the Taiwan Youth Association. In his capacity as a leading independence activist and intellectual he wrote his opus *Taiwan: A History of Agonies*, with the intention of showing the history of Taiwan as a series of ethnic conflicts, in order to argue that Hoklo and Hakka Han residents of Taiwan, through these conflicts and development under Japanese colonial capitalism, had established an independent national consciousness (i.e. an imagined Taiwanese national community).

Both men's historical narratives characterize the history of Taiwan as a never-ending cycle of invasion and exploitation, but where they primarily differ is how they characterize the nature of these conflicts. For Su Beng, modern Taiwan history travels through a cycle of domination by Qing dynasty elites, Japanese imperial capitalists, through to the contemporary predicament at the time he wrote the book of Taiwan being the focus of a never-ending storm of conflict between KMT mainland imperializing fascists and the forces of socialist-imperialism under the mainland CCP. Su Beng recognizes capitalism, with its internal logic and drive to expand, systematize, and integrate all markets under one hegemonic power structure, as the

primary force behind these conflicts. Ong Iok-tek recognizes essentially the same cycle of invasion and oppression, but he does not read capitalism as the engine of these agonies. He sees ethnic conflict, first between the Hoklo and Hakka migrants and the aboriginals, then between all those groups and the Japanese, and then between all those groups and the mainlanders, as the driving force behind events in Taiwan.

Although these two men differ in their political ideology and in the narratives they write for Taiwanese history, they both do something that was unique prior to the collapse of martial law in Taiwan—they include the Taiwanese Communist Party within their historiographic writing and attempt to provide a historical narrative that can be deployed in the construction of a Taiwanese nationalism. Their respective portrayals of the TCP differ significantly, however, but not in a way that is inconsistent with the overall very different ways that they read Taiwanese history. Ong very clearly prioritizes the national liberation aspect of the TCP and downplays, to an extent that is not consistent with most other scholarship on the TCP, the role of CCP in the TCP's affairs and activities, and putting much more emphasis on the nurturing role that the Japanese Communist Party (JCP) played. He summarizes his views on the relationship between the CCP and TCP at the end of his section on the party:

. . . the Taiwanese Communists had no relations with the current leaders of the Chinese Communist party. . . who lay hidden in the French Concession then. Their contacts were scanty and sporadic. Hsieh Hsueh-hung [Xie Xuehong] and Lin Mu-shun sought refuge in the mainland after the failure in the 228 Incident, but the current Chinese Communist

Leaders received them with bitterness and contempt calling them “aborigine communists” and “local nationalists,” and in the end ruthlessly purged them all.⁴⁰

Most other scholarship, including Su Beng’s, does not support these claims about the lack of a CCP role in the TCP. The rest of the information is correct based on what would have been known in Japan and Taiwan at the time, there was no way Ong could know that Xie Xuehong and other TCP members would be rehabilitated after Deng Xiaoping’s ascent to power in 1976, largely so they could advocate for his proposal of “one country, two systems” for Taiwan.

Su Beng, on the other hand, portrays the TCP not as a nationalist movement, though he certainly characterizes it as a national liberation movement, and instead focuses on the international character of the party and its support, as well its role in supporting the development of class consciousness among Taiwanese for the first time. He emphasizes that “the party took a serious view of the connection between the Communist Party of Japan and the Communist party of China,” and points out that representatives of the CCP and Korean Communist Party were present at the establishing ceremony. He acknowledges what I will also put forth as one of the most important facts about the Taiwanese Communist Party, that it clearly states “national independence” for Taiwan as one of its goals in its political outline, and was “the first time in Taiwanese history that the existence of ‘Taiwan the nation’ was recognized clearly and absolutely.”⁴¹

The historical significance of the Taiwanese Communist Party within the Taiwanese independence tradition begins to become clear after examining these two incredibly important pieces of historiography, but even more important than their content is what the conditions of

⁴⁰ Ong Iok-tek. *Taiwan: A History of Agonies*. 200.

⁴¹ Su, Beng. 110.

their production tell us about the historiographic writing of Taiwan—pro-Taiwanese independence historiography and historiography of left-wing political movements could only be produced outside of the Sinophone world. Here we see the intimate link between the Taiwanese independence movement, left-wing political movements, and Taiwanese intellectuals in exile. Although their efforts may not have directly contributed to the end of martial law in Taiwan, their contributions to the intellectual tradition of Taiwanese independence and the construction of Taiwanese nationalism, as well as the links between the socialist movement and the Taiwanese independence movement, could perhaps serve to complicate our understanding of modern Taiwanese History.

Strains of Taiwanese Independence

It is important to note that the leftist Taiwanese independence movements of the TCP and Su Beng are not the direct precursors to the contemporary version of Taiwanese independence that is embodied by the DPP or the young radicals of Taiwan. The contemporary strain of Taiwanese independence thinking can be better traced back to the demands of Taiwan's Hokkien speaking upper class and intellectuals for a greater say in local Taiwanese affairs under both the Japanese and KMT. They made a great deal of progress towards this goal under the Japanese only to see it all rolled back with the onset of the Second Sino-Japanese War. After the defeat of the Japanese, a wary KMT was unwilling to allow participatory government for a population that it felt had been "spiritually corrupted" by the colonizer, and would first need to be subjected to a brutal re-Sinicization campaign before such privileges could even be considered. The flight into exile or execution of all Taiwanese leftists left only these more liberal ideologies for rising leaders and activists to draw upon when formulating their political positions and strategies.

Although the Taiwanese leftists continued to organize in exile, they never managed to have a substantial political impact on the island again.

The DPP can be directly traced back to the *Tangwai*⁴² movement that began in the mid-1970's, which marked the beginning of non-KMT candidates contesting local elections and often winning. Political parties other than the KMT were still banned at this time, so these candidates would run as independents. The candidates themselves were seeking to address the issues of Taiwan's local Hokkien-speaking majority, who up until that point were neglected by the KMT at the best of times and actively oppressed at the worst. This marked the first time that the KMT allowed the domination of Taiwanese society by mainlanders to relax a little, and the first time participatory government was allowed since the Japanese surrender. Su Beng and his allies began to lose any kind of real political influence they still had with Taiwanese intellectuals and radicals at this time, the new generation of western-educated Taiwanese activists had no interest in the violent revolution advocated by Su Beng. When presented with the choice of going to the West to study electoral politics and electioneering or going to Su Beng's Tokyo restaurant to learn how to make bombs and join what was essentially a terrorist cell, most chose the former. With peaceful reform looking more and more plausible, fewer and fewer young people were willing to pay the costs of fighting for a total and immediate revolution.

Another factor that led to the gradual loss of influence within the Taiwanese independence movement for Su Beng was that his opus, *Taiwan's 400 Year History*, was written in Japanese, which was banned from being used or taught by the KMT shortly after they took control of the island. Over time, less and less Taiwanese people possessed the ability to even

⁴² 黨外, literally meaning "outside the party."

read his book, which did not receive a translation to Chinese until 1980, 18 years after its original publication. Su Beng could not speak Mandarin, which precluded him from working with the anti-KMT activists of Taiwan's ruling mainlander minority as well. The primary generation that would have been influenced by his work is the generation of Taiwanese that grew up under Japanese rule, Lee Teng-hui would be a notable example. Among this generation, especially those who studied or worked abroad, his book was extraordinarily popular, the way it was written easily lent itself to an anti-Japanese, anti-CCP, and anti-KMT reading. This was incredibly useful and appealing for those who wanted to distance themselves from all the extent political players and ideologies and move towards a liberal-democratic order instead. It was also one of only a handful of books on the history of Taiwan that existed at the time, so if one wanted to construct a historical justification for a Taiwanese nation or to politically identify with the island rather than China, it was one of the only potential sources for one to draw upon.

During the second half of the 1980's, the *Tangwai* movement formally crystallized into the DPP and Chiang Ching-kuo and the KMT leadership ended martial law and began the slow march towards democratization. After Chiang's unexpected death, the rule of Taiwan passed for the first time into a non-mainlander's hands as Lee Teng-hui assumed power. Over time it became clear that Lee's predilection toward Taiwanese independence was even greater than that of the fledgling DPP, which would eventually lead to a disintegration of the KMT that they have never really recovered from. Lee's suspicion and distrust of the mainland, having been most likely influenced by the writings of Su Beng and Lee's own experience as a young communist revolutionary, would lead him to impose extremely harsh restrictions on economic relations with mainland China, almost completely banning *Taishang* from investing in mainland China. These restrictions were greatly loosened by Chen Shui-bian, Taiwan's first DPP president, and

loosened even more under Ma Ying-jeou. Contrary to the conventional wisdom, even now under Tsai Ying-wen economic relations with the PRC are for more open than they were under Lee Teng-hui. In these political actions one can see the reflection of Su Beng's fear of the "socialist imperialism" of the CCP and a distinct disinclination to sanction the economic colonization of the PRC by *Taishang*, all ideas with a distinctly Marxist origin. Much like the idea that greater economic and cultural exchange between the PRC and Hong Kong would lead to the political liberalization of the PRC, the idea that similar exchanges between the PRC and Taiwan will lead to a desire for democratization in the mainland has proven to be false.

Under DPP ideology, it is very much possible to support economic integration with the PRC and yet still be pro-Taiwanese independence. Some advocate for a greater exchange with the PRC in order to influence it. This is best exemplified by a theory developed to explain similar thinking in Hong Kong, the concept of "Northbound Colonialism." Law Wing-sang best describes this concept in the following:

. . . for the new breed of Hong Kong red capitalists, the vast hinterland of China is an unlimited space, a new virgin frontier for capitalist colonization. Border crossings between one's self and Other, past and present, and material interests and spiritual redemption and bargaining between locality, nationality, and global ties and links are all possible within the reaches of the business empire, and behind all this is the smart, hard-working Hong Kong character. This is also where the affirmation of a Hong Kong identity is concomitant with the assertion of an imperial desire. . . . imagining themselves as the steam engines of Chinese modernization . . .⁴³

⁴³ Law. 211-212.

This is to say, that Hong Kong capitalists view their role vis-à-vis the mainland the same as the British saw their role with respect to Hong Kong; that of spreading civilization and economic prosperity through exploitation. They believe their earlier and more extensive economic development makes them superior, to the extent that “this chauvinistic sense of pride over a backward China is so widespread as to constitute as much a class ideology as a popular hegemony.”⁴⁴

I believe this Northbound Colonialism framework can be applied just as effectively to Taiwan as well as Hong Kong, a “Cross-Strait Colonialism,” if you will. The *Taishang*, much like the Hong Kong capitalist, sees himself as coming from a more developed and civilized place, and bringing progress and development with him through his investments and other dealings. The *Taishang* and the Hong Kong capitalist credit China’s rapid success to themselves, rather than to any policy or effort by the CCP. The difference lies in that the *Taishang*, unlike his counterpart from Hong Kong, is also more politically developed, in so much as Taiwan successfully self-democratized whereas Hong Kong never managed totally independent democratic self-rule under the British or the PRC. If the *Taishang* views himself as Chinese, it is as the full realization what a Chinese person should be, the idea of regressing back to being under the “backwards” mainlanders is unthinkable. The popularity and presence of Taiwan’s brands and products throughout the mainland merely serves to reinforce this sense of superiority, as Law describes here;

Even the sternest skeptics of the Chinese communist regime find solace in being able to discern a Hong Kong cultural presence embodied in all commercial icons found in

⁴⁴ Law, 213.

Chinese cities and other, more backwards places. As a result, Hong Kong northbound colonialism is successfully under way as a creeping civilizing mission lacking only a church and a clergy.⁴⁵

The *Taishang* views integration with the mainland as a way to make the mainland more like Taiwan, rather than a way for Taiwan to become more like the mainland, thus the PRC's policies to encourage economic integration and cross-strait investment actually *reinforce* the *Taishang*'s sense of Taiwanese identity. In their attempts to proactively entice or coerce Taiwan back into national union, the PRC leadership seems to have failed to realize that although some may have an appetite for integration in Taiwan, there is essentially no one who wants to live in a society organized and run by the PRC, which the vast majority of Taiwanese still very much consider to be "backwards."

This type thinking is unacceptable for Su Beng and his comrades, as their goal would not be to just sever relations with China and reorient Taiwanese investment to Southeast Asia, but rather to extirpate Taiwan entirely from the matrix of oppression that characterizes international trade. Equally unacceptable are recent slashes to the Taiwanese welfare state made under the DPP. One of the things that makes the Taiwanese independence movement fascinating as a social phenomenon is the way that it is made up of individuals and groups with completely incompatible political ideologies, the single unifying theme generally just being an opposition to authoritarianism and both the CPP and KMT. There is also often a certain level of romanization of the Japanese Colonial Period, but this is generally done just to infuriate the One-China nationalist leaders of both of said parties; it is intended to be provocative. A TCP member would

⁴⁵ Law. 213.

also most likely take issue with the way that supporting Taiwanese independence has become a market strategy for many Taiwanese companies. It is not uncommon for a book, film, or even video game that is published in Taiwan to see a massive uptick in domestic sales after it has been banned in China.

From this information one can glean that there are two primary strains of Taiwanese independence thought: the liberal-democratic ideas that originated in the *Tangwai* movement and came to be embodied by the DPP, and the radical Marxist ideology that advocated for violent revolution that has largely died out in contemporary times. Su Beng was ideologically isolated from the Independence movement upon his return to Taiwan in the 1990's, but that did not stop him from supporting its advocates even if he did not personally agree with their liberal-democratic views. He attempted to reinvent himself as the “grandfather of Taiwanese Independence,” and worked as an activist full time. He formed an organization that copied the tactic of employing *gaisensha*,⁴⁶ cars with loudspeaker systems built into them to deliver messages while traveling around a city, that he had often seen used by Japanese political parties. Every weekend he would drive around Taipei broadcasting recorded messages advocating for Taiwanese independence around Taipei. He became a celebrity of sorts, Taiwan's very own Che Guevara, expressing an interest in or support for him came to be seen as chic within Taiwan's youth culture.

His most lasting influence, however, was upon the field of Taiwanese history, which he is one of the founders of. A great intellectual debt is owed to him by all those who study this field, which is now finally starting to gain traction outside of Taiwan, and it is unusual for a book on

⁴⁶ 街宣車

Taiwanese history to not mention him at least once. Without the Taiwan-centric understanding of the island's history that he helped to develop, it would be essentially impossible for the individuals that the Taiwanese independence movement is composed of to construct a coherent historical narrative to justify their newfound nationalism. For this reason, until his death, he could be often found at public events with Freddy Lim, Lee Teng-hui, or other prominent independence activists where they would heap great praise upon him and urge all attendees that had not already done so to buy his book. He found a place for himself as a sort of spiritual leader for young radicals, who they idolized as someone who had risked death and exile to stand up for their common principles, and most importantly, he was revered for giving them a sense of history grounded in the island they all call home.

Chapter 2

Long Live the Taiwanese People's Independence [臺灣人民獨立萬歲]⁴⁷: The Taiwanese

Communist Party and the National Liberation Movement

[Part of the CCP's] External policy . . . [is to] support the independence movements of the peoples of Korea and Taiwan. —Liu Shaoqi⁴⁸

If the Koreans wish to break away from the chains of Japanese Imperialism, we will extend them our enthusiastic help in their struggle for independence. The same thing applies to Taiwan. —Mao Zedong⁴⁹

The Taiwanese Communist Party (TCP) uniquely stands out from most of Taiwan's modern history in that it not only challenges the nationalist narratives of the KMT and contemporary Taiwanese liberal independence activists, but also through its relationship with the Comintern and the CCP embodies the recent origin of the PRC's claims to the island. Although the TCP only existed for less than a decade before being annihilated by the Japanese colonial administration and never even came close to achieving its political goals, its relationship with the international communist movement and its own stated mission of "national liberation" for Taiwan can be used to interestingly problematize the current independence movement's historical narrative.

During the Japanese Colonial period there were a number of political movements which opposed Japanese rule, but there was only one political group that sought to work outside the political system established by the Japanese and engage in a direct confrontation for the national liberation of Taiwan, that group was the Taiwanese Communist Party. From its earliest

⁴⁷ Cited from the 1928 TCP political outline in 臺灣獨立運動史. 52.

⁴⁸ Cited in Lan, Shi-Chi Mike. "THE AMBIVALENCE OF NATIONAL IMAGINATION." 187.

⁴⁹ Cited in Lan, Shi-Chi Mike. "THE AMBIVALENCE OF NATIONAL IMAGINATION." 187.

beginnings the TCP was born of two fathers, the Chinese Communist Party and the Japanese Communist Party, and would be characterized by ideological conflict between two factions that identified with the two father parties. The TCP was formally established and chartered in Shanghai in 1928, almost all of its founding members were also members of the Chinese Communist Party, and the establishing meeting was chaired by a local Shanghai CCP member. The TCP's political outline, which would certainly throw a contemporary CCP cadre into a rage upon reading it, was not only tacitly but even openly endorsed by the CCP hierarchy.

Despite the intimate links between the TCP and CCP from the moment of its formal incorporation as a branch of the Comintern, the TCP political outline was not written in Chinese and nor was it written with the help or consultation of mainland CCP members, but rather it was written in Japanese under the tutelage of Japanese Communist Party members in Tokyo. Japanese was the obvious choice for the language of the party political outline, as it was the only language most Taiwanese people were able to read, if they were literate at all. Furthermore, the TCP was not established as a branch party of the CCP; in 1928 it was originally incorporated into the Comintern as a "nationality branch" of the Japanese Communist Party, again with the full support and backing of the CCP.

In order to properly understand the significance of the TCP's status as a nationality branch of the JCP, and the even more significant promotion of the TCP to an independent party in 1931, one must have a thorough understanding of the structure of the international communist movement as it was formally incorporated under the auspices of the Communist International. The Comintern operated under a principle of "one country, one party" and accordingly any individual state would only have one party, but in recognition of the many nations living under imperial subjugation the Comintern included a nationality branch system. A nationality branch

was a separate party organization to serve one of these subjugated nations, that was a branch of the imperializing nation's communist party. Nationality branches had the possibility of later being upgraded to full independent parties if, after a period of instruction and training by the primary party, the Comintern leadership believed the situation suitable to revolution and the expulsion of the colonizers.⁵⁰ An independent party was understood to be the rightful ruler of an independent state after the revolution, meaning that when the TCP was promoted to an independent party in 1931 that the Comintern leadership, as well as the CCP and JCP, planned for and supported Taiwan to be an independent nation-state after the war.

The leader of the TCP until 1931, as mentioned before, was a Taiwanese woman named Xie Xuehong who was trained in the Soviet Union for the task of organizing the revolution in Taiwan. She and Lin Mushan, who was also trained in the USSR, would form the core of the TCP's leadership until 1931, and represented the pro-JCP faction of the party. Frank Hsiao and Lawrence Sullivan postulate that Xie Xuehong and Lin Mushan received their primary influence from Japanese Communist Party theorists, such as Yamakawa Hitoshi and Fukumoto Kazuo. Yamakawa-ism and Fukumoto-ism would both be denounced as deviations by the Comintern, which would play a role in Xie and Lin's eventual fall from power in the party. Both Yamakawa and Fukumoto claimed to be adapting Marxism to the peculiarities of Japanese Capitalism, and appropriately developed wildly different revolutionary strategies from the orthodox positions endorsed by the Comintern.

Yamakawa thought that unlike Western Capitalism, Japanese Capitalism was infested with "feudal remnants," and therefore he developed his theory of "a single proletarian party"

⁵⁰ Hsiao, Frank S. T., and Lawrence R. Sullivan. 272.

which stated that “the entire proletariat should form a single political power, the proletarian party, which need not abide by the higher goals and thesis of the party.”⁵¹ This greatly diminished the role of the communist party as the vanguard of the revolution, and its emphasis on the party as a purely intellectual organization contributed to the development of Fukumoto-ism and the intense focus on intellectual refinement and lesser prioritization of mass struggle by the TCP. For Fukumoto, the highest priority of the party was “the molding of an ideologically pure intellectual elite” that “needed to precede the organization of popular support, insuring against any potential compromise with the masses’ ‘backward’ consciousness.”⁵² The influence of Fukumoto-ism in the TCP under the leadership of Xie Xuehong and Lin Mushan is very clear, as the party was mainly focused on intellectual and ideological debate among its members, with very little effort devoted to organizing mass action.

The party platform outlined four clear primary goals:

1. Overthrow Japanese imperialist rule and achieve the independence of Taiwan; 2. Confiscate properties, lands, businesses, and banks in Taiwan owned by Japanese imperialists; 3. Implement land reform and eliminate the feudalistic system of exploitation; 4. Build an independent and democratic government in Taiwan.⁵³

It is highly unlikely that the democratic government that they were referring to when writing their platform and slogans such as “Establish the Taiwan Republic [建立台灣共和國]”⁵⁴ was a competitive multiparty liberal democracy, but rather a Leninist party-state based on “democratic centralism” such as the USSR or the future PRC. Still, it is interesting to note the intimate link

⁵¹ Cited from Yamakawa in Hsiao, Frank S. T., and Lawrence R. Sullivan. 282-3.

⁵² Hsiao, Frank S. T., and Lawrence R. Sullivan. 283.

⁵³ Ong, Iok-tek. 198.

⁵⁴ 台灣獨立運動史. 51.

between class struggle and national liberation, and in fact a source of great conflict within the party was whether to align themselves with the “national bourgeoisie” and engage in a united front for national liberation or not. This debate would be ended decisively, however, due to the intervention of the Comintern in 1931.

At that time a political coup within the party was organized by the members of the pro-CCP faction, who had been the TCP leaderships’ sole points of contact with the Comintern. These pro-CCP individuals had been incessantly saturating their written reports back to the Comintern with criticism of Xie Xuehong and her leadership, particularly her practice of the prohibited “deviations” of Yamakawa-ism and Fukumoto-ism. The Comintern’s Far Eastern Bureau moved swiftly to sever the TCP from the JCP, with the eager support of the CCP, promoting the TCP from a nationality branch to a fully independent party, and expelling Xie Xuehong and Lin Mushan from the TCP. The TCP now returned its strategy to the orthodox one espoused by the Comintern and the CCP, one of organizing the masses for revolution against the Japanese. In the end this would prove to be the TCP’s undoing, however, as the increased frequency of incidents of rural and industrial labor agitation led to the Japanese colonial administration swiftly cracking down on the party. All of its members would be dead, in prison, or forced into exile by the end of the year.

The Science of Successful Revolution

The greatest international issue for the [Japanese] Communist Party is to organize an effective struggle against a second war of imperialism, and to link it with the struggle of the Soviet Union and positive support of and liaison with the revolutionary movements in Korea and Taiwan. —JCP Theses⁵⁵

The Present war is being waged against the Chinese Nationalist military clique, which is the agent of European and American capital and which supports the old order. The objective of the war is the liberation of 400 million Chinese. Since the War involves the expansion of the Japanese nation into a country that is remarkably backward in culture compared to Japan, it is in accord with the principle of historical progress. —Sano and Nabeyama, JCP Defectors⁵⁶

To understand Taiwanese Marxism it is necessary to first examine Japanese Marxism, particularly its route of transmission from the west and the reasons why it was adopted by local radicals. Prior to the Bolshevik revolution Marxism had little currency among the various study societies or labor movements that were home to the majority of radicals in East Asia at the time, and Japan was not an exception to this. The opening of the floodgates to western ideas had left these radicals with such a vast array of new theories to choose from that they struggled to familiarize themselves with all of the arguments before leaping into the political scene to advocate for their chosen theory. Over time, however, what precisely made a good theory began to crystallize in their minds: which theory could best present itself as *the science of successful revolution*.⁵⁷ Marxism, which had always claimed to be the scientific explanation of man's social and economic world, immediately began to be championed by radicals as soon as the Bolshevik Revolution made it the most successful revolutionary ideology.

⁵⁵ Cited in Beckmann and Okubo, *The Japanese Communist Party, 1922-1945*. 205.

⁵⁶ Cited in Beckmann and Okubo, *The Japanese Communist Party, 1922-1945*. 247.

⁵⁷ Scalapino. 13.

Socialism was first brought to Japan by Christian intellectuals after the conclusion of the first Sino-Japanese War, but at that time Marx was just one of many socialist theorists to them and his works were likewise accorded no more preference than those of any of the others read by the study societies (e.g. Henry George, Saint-Simon, Fourier, Blanc, Proudhon, Lassalle, Bebel, etc.). The philosophical orientation of these early societies' members was generally towards Christian humanism, which had a lasting and indelible legacy on the Japanese Socialist movement that made its members far more predisposed to pacificism and genuine internationalism than other Socialist movements in East Asia. These early socialists were committed to achieving their political objectives through the parliamentary process and through peaceful agitation via the labor movement, and it would not be until their political movements and study societies, as well as the labor movement itself, were banned or suppressed that alternative currents of thought would begin to emerge among left-wing radicals. By 1906 the suppressive pressure applied to the movement by the government split Japan's socialists into two primary factions: peaceful reformers—who were still largely Christian social democrats with an affinity for Tosltoyan thought and universal suffrage—and the violent revolutionaries. The revolutionaries had come to look upon the dimension of socialism derived from Christian spirituality, as well as the Christians themselves, with contempt; they now derived their ideas from the materialism of Marxist and anarcho-syndicalist philosophy.⁵⁸

Anarcho-syndicalism was the dominant strain of socialism in Japan into the early 1920's, which caused a number of problems for Japan's integration into the international socialist movement. For example, when the Comintern called the First Congress of the Toilers of the Far East in January, 1922, almost all of Japan's representatives—who due to Japan's lack of a

⁵⁸ Scalapino. 10.

communist party attended using American Communist Party membership cards—were in fact anarchists, not budding communists. To get anyone to attend the Comintern representative had to say that anarchists were welcome as well, because they would be won over by communism at the meeting. Communism, and the Marxism upon which it is based, would not really begin to become popular until it became clear among radicals that the anarchist revolutionary strategy was a complete failure and was unlikely to ever find any success. As Anarchist labor unions began to be crushed by the government or abandoned by their membership, it became clear that such a disorganized approach was flawed from the outset. It was only then that Marxism began to dominate the discourse and assume the mantle of *the science of successful revolution*, which finally spurred the radicals to found their own national communist party, to be a full member party of the Communist International.⁵⁹

By the time that the international socialist movement began to be organized around the Comintern by the Soviet Union, Japan was already an imperial power in its own right, with colonies dispersed throughout East Asia. This led to marked differences in the Marxism and political movements of Japanese Communists from other East Asia Marxists. The appeal of the ideology in China or Korea was largely based upon its prediction and advocacy of the end of the colonization of weaker nations by imperialists, and the eventual triumph of the weak over the powerful. Many Chinese nationalists were drawn to Communism out of their desire for China to return to what they saw as its rightful position as the most powerful nation in the world, they naturally were drawn to an ideology that stressed the moral superiority of the weak over the strong. In Japan there was no such drive to “rejuvenate” the nation through socialist revolution; it was never about national strength for the Japanese communists. Indeed, there were even some

⁵⁹ Scalapino. 13.

Japanese Marxists who believed that Japan was obligated to colonize the rest of East Asia so that they might bring their more advanced productive forces to those more feudal societies, thus hastening the coming of global communism.⁶⁰ Others thought that a great workers' state could be established in Japan and her colonies, where Japanese revolutionaries could shepherd their more primitive colonial subjects into the utopia. The best example of this kind of thinking were the defectors Sano and Nabeyama, who wrote the following:

Today Japan belongs among the great powers of the world. This is the result of (1) firm national unity, expressed in the state and the monarchy; (2) internal social cohesion; (3) the role of the family as the basic social unit; (4) the high productivity of workers; and (5) the cumulative genius of Eastern culture. Japan stands among those nations that lead, not among those that are led. The concepts of independence of colonies and national determination are outdated bourgeois concepts; weak nations like Manchuria, Formosa,⁶¹ and Korea should enjoy equal rights under one people's government by merging with Japan, which is economically close to them.⁶²

All of these ideas were abhorrent to the leadership of the Comintern, which believed that this sort of relationship would exist but it would be all the other peoples of the world being led by a revolutionary vanguard of Russians, and all such Japanese thinkers were denounced for their ideological deviations.⁶³ This sort of thinking was well outside the party orthodoxy, but it is a

⁶⁰ This is actually in line with Marx's own thinking on the role colonialism plays in the march to socialism, as evidenced by his writings on India. See "The British Rule in India." Accessed September 22, 2019. <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1853/06/25.htm>.

⁶¹ Note that Taiwan is considered a distinct and separate nation from China.

⁶² Cited in Beckmann and Okubo. 247.

⁶³ Beckmann and Okubo. 245-249.

very unique theory that stands in stark contrast to communist political positions in the rest of East Asia, which were always written from a position of national weakness, never strength.

The Japanese Communist Party was noted for its many arcane theoretical debates, which it was generally more interested in than engaging in any actual revolutionary strategy, and even disbanded itself for a short while. Their understanding of Japan, and the Marxism that would suit the Japanese situation, was written from the position of a strong capitalist nation, in contrast with the theories of Chinese and Russian communists, who always wrote from a position of resentful hatred towards those nations which were more powerful or economically developed than theirs'. The Japanese Communists were far more concerned with actually achieving communism than strengthening the nation, but most of all they were interested in adapting Marxism to their own situation without twisting it into fascism. Unfortunately, they did not have the time to finish crafting the perfect theory before they were completely crushed by the Comintern's influence and persecution by the Japanese government. All of these characteristics make the Japanese communist movement stand out from the other East Asian movements, and they would all come to characterize the Taiwanese communist movement as well, and contribute to its distinctiveness vis-à-vis the Chinese communist movement.

Chinese and Taiwanese Marxism in Dialogue

. . . *The race question has become a class question and the races, on a world scale, have come to confront each other as classes* —Li Dazhao⁶⁴

[Be careful to avoid] that national revolutionary messianic mood which prompts one to see one's own nation-state as destined to lead mankind to socialism.
—Leon Trotsky⁶⁵

A key difference between Chinese Marxism and the Marxism of Taiwan, which was heavily influenced by Japanese thought, is their respective relationships to nationalism. Taiwanese nationalism was born of Marxism, adopted as the best revolutionary strategy and only way to free Taiwan from its history of always being the periphery of an empire, which stands in stark contrast to the way that Marxism in China was popularized due to its ability to serve the interests of Chinese nationalism. Taiwanese Marxists found it necessary to construct a nationalism in order to accomplish the goals of Marxism, whereas Chinese Marxists adopted Marxism in order to accomplish their nationalist goals. In this way the Marxism and revolutionary strategy were in line with orthodox Marxist and Leninist ideas, whereas the Marxism of China falls into a category that Western Marxists often refer to as “nationalist deviation.” In order to examine this issue in greater detail, one must turn to Maurice Meisner’s seminal work on Chinese Marxism: *Li Ta-Chao and the Origins of Chinese Marxism*.

Meisner paints a picture of the intellectual situation of China in the early 20th century, and what is immediately obvious to one after reading his account is that there were *no Marxists in China prior to the outbreak of the revolution in Russia and the success of the Bolsheviks*. This is confirmed by the absence of Marxist writings in Chinese beyond smaller excerpts, and that

⁶⁴ Meisner. 191.

⁶⁵ Meisner. 193.

there is no evidence to suggest that Marxism or socialism had any currency among Chinese intellectuals, unlike the situation in Japan, where scholarly interest in Marxism predated the Russian Revolution. Marxism, or more appropriately Marxism as turned into an actionable political ideology by Vladimir Lenin, appealed to Li Dazhao and other intellectuals in China because it seemed to be having success. Without the victories of the Bolsheviks it is unlikely that the global proletarian revolution foretold by Marx would have seemed to be in progress to these intellectuals, which certainly would have resulted in them not having much of any affinity for it, if they even ever become aware of it at all. The utility of Marxism, in that it provides a teleological understanding of history which accounts for the “century of humiliation” and contains a prescription for the future compatible with the Chinese desire for a great “national rejuvenation,” combined with the fact that the downfall of Western Capitalism and Imperialism seemed to be already in progress, as evidenced through the Bolshevik successes in Russia, to make Marxism into an extremely appealing ideology for Chinese nationalists. Furthermore, Marxism claimed to be a “science,” which certainly would have been appealing to early 20th century intellectuals, whose prevailing world view, as an overreaction to the undoubtedly unscientific nature of premodern Chinese thought, has been considered by some scholars to be based in “scientism” (i.e. the application of rationalism to all aspects of human existence and society)⁶⁶.

Meisner writes that for Li Dazhao, as well as the contemporary CCP, modern Chinese history is essentially “the history of Chinese national resistance to imperialist aggression.”⁶⁷ The book, when considered in its totality, appears to portray Li Dazhao, and by extension the CCP

⁶⁶ See Kwok, D. W. Y. *Scientism in Chinese Thought: 1900-1950*. Yale University Press, 1965.

⁶⁷ Meisner. 174.

itself, as a nationalist movement first, and a communist movement second. Meisner claims that this primacy of nationalism within the consciousness of Chinese communists is most visible in its manifestation in the thought of Li Dazhao's most famous student, Mao Zedong. Meisner suggests that Chen Duxiu held views closer to those of what was at that time considered an orthodox European Marxist, and that this may have played some role in why the blame for the early struggles of the party was placed exclusively at his feet, or vice versa. Li Dazhao's idea of China as a "proletarian nation" and his assertion that class struggle was in fact racial struggle all seem to support this line of thinking.

Records of the Taiwanese Communist Party primarily exist in Japanese archives and the archives of the Comintern in Russia, and as such are often beyond the reach of historians of China. Those held in Russia are particularly valuable, as the Russians in their role as the most "senior" revolutionaries often served as arbitrators in disputes between factions within the world's myriad communist parties. Putting this kind of scholarship (the most notable of which being the work of Michael Share) in dialogue with Meisner's work serves to highlight the many structural and ideological differences between the CCP and the TCP. For example, the TCP adopted an orthodox Marxist-Leninist strategy, which was to focus on the urban proletariat (something Taiwan had in much greater number than China did) and to not involve the peasants in the movement, at least not in a leadership capacity⁶⁸, which was very different from the strategy of Li Dazhao and Mao. Furthermore, Share's work supports the notion that the CCP originally supported the holding of an election to determine whether or not Taiwan would be independent, before later accepting the provisions of the Cairo Conference and effectively

⁶⁸ Share. 175.

supporting the unconditional return of Taiwan to the jurisdiction of Chiang Kai-shek and denying the right to self-determination they had once been willing to grant the Taiwanese⁶⁹.

Within Su Beng and the TCP's Marxist understanding of Taiwan's history and place in the world one finds echoes of the ideas of another Marxist thinker: Immanuel Wallerstein. Wallerstein's understanding of the world as composed of world systems, where some places are core to the system and some places are mere peripheries that are targeted for resource extraction, bears a striking resemblance to Su Beng's understanding of Taiwan after WWII as a location where the Capitalist world system of the West and the Communist world system are in conflict over who gets to incorporate and exploit Taiwan. For Su Beng and the Taiwanese socialist movement, Taiwanese history is characterized by an endless cycle of colonization and incorporation into empires, with each new colonizer bringing with them promises of uplifting and development in one hand, and harsh measures designed to oppress the local people and their customs in order to "civilize" them and keep Taiwan as a well-oiled cog in the greater machinery of the empire and world system in the other. For these men and women, a socialist revolution organized around Taiwan as a nation-state was the only way to even have a chance to escape the seemingly unchangeable fate of their island to be relegated to nothing more than a periphery in perpetuity. Su Beng's history of Taiwan is characterized by a strong underlying idea that Taiwan will always be oppressed so long as it is incorporated into a world system where the rules are written by those outside the island, and it is only through educating Taiwanese on the nature of their 400 years history as a periphery that they will be able to achieve the kind of consciousness that allows them to throw off the yoke of colonial and imperial domination. For

⁶⁹ Share. 180.

these Marxists, constructing a nationalism was instrumental to the objective of liberating Taiwan, and became their own *science of successful revolution*.

Afterword

The construction of Taiwanese nationalism is an ongoing process, but it has passed from the hands of Taiwanese Marxists into those of the young liberal radicals who were behind the Sunflower protest movement in 2014. Among these young activists, largely born in 1990's or later, there seems to already be a general amnesia of the fact there was ever a time when most Taiwanese people didn't seem themselves as Taiwanese. The Taiwan that they grew up in's relationship to China is far more complex than that of their Marxist forebearers, with Taiwanese corporations and capitalists in ever greater numbers engaged in brutal exploitation of Chinese laborers.⁷⁰ This complicates the construction of a nationalism predicated upon an idea of Taiwan as a perpetual periphery, as the matrix of exploitation within the truly global capitalist world system that Taiwan now finds itself imbricated in with the PRC is far more opaque than that of the Japanese colonial period and the immediate post-war era. That these young people often seem unaware that Taiwanese nationalism is not in fact eternal and ancient serves as conclusive proof of the great success that intellectuals and activists have had in creating an imagined community of a Taiwanese nation, and that they are totally unaware of any Marxist influence indicates the great failings of the socialist movement to ever win any mainstream support during its heyday.

The popular misconception among Taiwanese that what separates the island from the mainland is their liberal capitalist economic system could stand to be challenged. The independence movement in Taiwan today enjoys a wide degree of support, especially among the young, but despite Su Beng speaking with Li Teng-hui or appearing in public with rockstar and

⁷⁰ Ngai, Pun, and Jenny Chan. "Global Capital, the State, and Chinese Workers."

Taiwanese independence activist Freddy Lim,⁷¹ voices like his and his Marxist critique are largely ignored. It is apparent from Ma Ying-Jeou's broadly liberal policy of economic integration with the PRC, which is far more economically liberal than the positions of the DPP, that economic liberalization actually serves to tie the PRC and Taiwan closer together. The history of the Taiwanese Communist Party presents a powerful challenge to the traditional notion of the relationship of Taiwan to the Communist mainland, but it is only the beginning. More research and a greater understanding of these sorts of political movements are necessary, and perhaps could contribute to the maintenance of peaceful relations across the Taiwan Strait.

⁷¹ “史明簽書會 Freddy 現身：他是我偶像。”自由時報電子報。
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